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August 22, 2019

To: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair
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Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Sachi A. Hamai
Chief Executive Officer

ANTELOPE VALLEY SOCIAL WORKER NEEDS (ITEM NO. 2, AGENDA OF JULY 16, 2019 AND ITEM NO. 25-A, AGENDA OF JULY 23, 2019)

Background

In response to the Board motions by Supervisor Barger on July 16 and 23, 2019, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to:

- Explore and consider salary options to support and work with DCFS in its efforts to recruit and retain social workers in the Antelope Valley (Palmdale and Lancaster offices).
- Create a new service bureau for DCFS in the Antelope Valley and immediately designate and fill a permanent full-time Deputy Director position and support staff.
- Implement a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Section that will provide a systemic structure that supports the consistent provision of quality case work practices by increasing the number of case reviews and begin by focusing on Antelope Valley offices.

Although meeting the recruitment and retention challenges in the Antelope Valley will require sustained and multi-faceted approaches, we believe the financial incentives described in this memo will provide an immediate and tangible first step towards addressing those challenges.

Recruitment and Retention Support for Antelope Valley Offices

Working with DCFS, the Departments of Human Resources (DHR), Health Services (DHS), Mental Health (DMH) and the Office of Child Protection, our office quickly convened a series of in-person meetings or teleconferences on July 15, 18, 19, 29 and August 12, 2019. In addition, our office deployed budget, compensation, classification and employee relations analysts to personally meet with DCFS Regional Administrators at the Palmdale office on July 18, 2019, to discuss staffing challenges. We also conducted an internal assessment of DCFS' recent recruitment and retention outcomes as well as an analysis of the salary data for the Social Worker series.

Our review confirmed that recruitment and retention challenges exist for Children's Social Workers (CSWs) in the Antelope Valley offices (i.e., DCFS offices located in the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster). Data over the last fiscal year indicates a higher total attrition rate (i.e., staff no longer working at a particular location) in the Antelope Valley as compared to the Department as a whole. The number of staff transferring out of the Antelope Valley offices lowers the retention rate and is evidenced by the fact that CSWs assigned to the Antelope Valley are more likely to have fewer years of social work experience than their counterparts in other DCFS offices.

Other factors we considered in our analysis is the uniqueness of the Antelope Valley's location (approximately 60 miles from Downtown Los Angeles, bordering Kern County), its size (approximately 1,170 square miles), its low population density, and how these combined factors likely contribute to recruitment and retention challenges. While the Antelope Valley offices face many challenges, their isolated geographical location and distance from a qualified candidate pool for Social Worker series items, play a significant role in the recruitment and retention issues that the Department has worked to address.

Based on our analysis, our conversations with DCFS staff in the Palmdale office and our support of DCFS hiring campaigns over the years, we understand that recruitment and retention challenges in the Antelope Valley are driven by a myriad of complex and competing factors, many of which, are beyond the control of DCFS. We acknowledge that managing and mitigating those drivers require a multi-pronged approach as outlined in the Board's July 23rd motion. Based on these factors, we believe that financial incentives may be a helpful, but not exclusive, step to supporting recruitment and retention of CSWs and Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSWs). Given these considerations, the CEO intends to implement two provisional location-based salary actions to assist DCFS with attracting new CSWs to work in the area, and to incentivize current CSWs and SCSWs to remain in the Antelope Valley.

Recruitment and Retention Incentives

Section 6.10.050 and 6.10.060 of Title 6 of the County Code provides for the establishment of a special hiring rate (Critical Shortage Recruitment Rate) and the establishment of an alternative salary range (Critical Shortage Range), when a CEO investigation finds that a critical shortage exists. These actions may be implemented at management discretion outside of the labor negotiations process. Based on our assessment, current conditions support implementing a Critical Shortage Recruitment Rate and Range.

Critical Shortage Recruitment Rate

We are implementing a Critical Shortage Recruitment Rate of Step 5 (Recruitment Rate) for the following positions assigned to DCFS offices in the Antelope Valley:

- Children's Social Worker I,
- Children's Social Worker II,
- Children's Social Worker III, and
- Supervising Children's Social Worker.

The Recruitment Rate will be used by DCFS to support a targeted Antelope Valley recruitment with advertised higher-starting salaries. This Recruitment Rate may also incentivize current journey-level CSWs to more readily accept promotions or transfers to the Antelope Valley or to otherwise remain in the area. The Recruitment Rate will immediately impact approximately 181 current CSWs working in the Antelope Valley who will advance to Step 5. The rate will be discontinued for those otherwise eligible DCFS staff transferring out of the Lancaster and Palmdale regional offices.

Critical Shortage Range

In addition, we will implement a Critical Shortage Range of ten percent (10%) for the same job classifications that will receive the Recruitment Rate (listed above) and for the Children's Social Worker Trainee working in the Antelope Valley offices. The Critical Shortage Range functions as an immediate across-the-board salary increase and will impact each of the approximately 448 employees in these job classifications in the Antelope Valley offices. The range will be paid as a monthly bonus.

While the primary goal of the Critical Shortage Range is to support the retention/continuity of existing social worker staff working in the Antelope Valley, this action should also bolster recruitment efforts as new hires, promotions, and transfers to these offices will also receive the higher salaries. Otherwise eligible staff transferring out of the Antelope Valley offices would no longer qualify for the Critical Shortage Range. We will continue

to review and monitor the effectiveness of these actions and make adjustments as warranted, including discontinuing these financial incentives if it is determined that they are ineffective or demonstrated to have little or no impact on recruitment and retention for these two DCFS offices.

CQI Division

The Board directed DCFS to immediately implement a CQI Section that will provide a systemic structure that supports the consistent provision of quality case work practices by increasing the number of case reviews and begins by focusing on Antelope Valley offices. Although the motion called for the creation of a Section, due to the importance of this function, we are recommending a division be created instead.

Earlier this month, our office granted DCFS immediate hiring authority and we will add 28 new budgeted items in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 Supplemental Budget for its requested CQI Division.

In advance of full establishment of a CQI Division, DCFS is deploying seven (7) analysts from within existing resources to immediately begin reviewing cases in its two Antelope Valley offices. It is expected that this initial review will be completed by the third week of September 2019.

Additional DCFS Service Bureau

The Board directed the creation of a new Service Bureau for DCFS in the Antelope Valley and immediately designate and fill a permanent full-time Deputy Director position and support staff.

Earlier this month, our office granted DCFS immediate hiring authority and will add seven (7) new budgeted items in the FY 2019-20 Supplemental Budget for the newly created Service Bureau.

Looking Forward

The Board's July 23, 2019 motion, also ordered several County departments, labor partners and community stakeholders to develop a comprehensive and sustainable staffing plan for CSWs in the Antelope Valley. The work of the Antelope Valley staffing and retention workgroup has already begun, and as directed by the Board, we will provide ongoing periodic reports containing updates on the ideas explored and progress made with the first report scheduled for September 8, 2019.

Each Supervisor
August 22, 2019
Page 5

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or your staff may contact Napoleon Valera at (213) 893-2259 or David Seidenfeld at (213) 974-1457.

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